

What is claimed is:

1. A method for operating a cooking appliance including a cooking chamber, which is bounded by a housing and a door in its closed position, and further including a cooking appliance control system, the door being automatically openable by the cooking appliance control system by means of a door opening device, the door being automatically moved from the closed position to the open position when the cooking process is complete, wherein, after the aforementioned movement to the open position, the door (6) is automatically returned to the closed position when a physical quantity falls below a predetermined threshold value stored in a memory of the cooking appliance control system.
2. A cooking appliance, in particular a steam cooking appliance, for carrying out the method according to Claim 1, comprising a cooking chamber which is bounded by a housing and a door in its closed position, and further comprising a cooking appliance control system, the door being automatically openable by the cooking appliance control system by means of a door opening device, the door opening device including a positioning motor and a rod, and the rod being capable of being automatically reciprocated by the cooking appliance control system by means of the positioning motor such a manner that the door can be automatically moved from its closed position to a predetermined open position and vice versa, the cooking appliance control system actuating the positioning motor as a function of the output signal of a sensor located in the cooking chamber, and the cooking appliance control system actuating the positioning motor in such a manner that the door is automatically moved from the closed position to the open position when the cooking process is complete, wherein the rod (8.2) can be reciprocated in a guide means (8.3), and the cooking appliance control system actuates the positioning motor (8.1) in such a manner that the door (6) is automatically returned to the closed position when a physical quantity falls below a predetermined threshold value stored in the memory.
3. The cooking appliance as recited in Claim 2, wherein the positioning motor (8.1) takes the form of an electrically heatable shape-memory element.
4. The cooking appliance as recited in one of the Claims 2 or 3,

wherein the returning of the door (6) from the open position to the closed position is aided by a return element which is disposed between the door (6) and the housing (4) and is in force-transmitting connection with the door (6) and the housing (4).

5. The cooking appliance as recited in one of Claims 2 to 4, wherein a spring means (8.4) or a damping means is mounted on the rod (8.2) in such a manner that the movement of the door (6) from the closed position to the open position, or vice versa, is retarded.